

Home Circle.

CHEERFUL RELIGION.

Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—John 15:33.

What a difference between the religious outlook of to-day and that of two or three generations ago! Is it because the world is degenerating or because it has a deeper love and reverence for the truth?

It used to be said that the best sermon was one that made the hearer crouch in the pew as though Satan were after him. In these times no such sermons are preached, or, if they are, it is in some obscure corner where the lichen flourishes and the moss on the rocks is wet with everlasting and malarial humidity. Have we turned our backs on holy things, or do we see with clearer eyes?

It is an age of blessed optimism, for which we cannot be too thankful. We love forms and ceremonies less than formerly, but we love truth more. The standpoint from which we view religious subjects has changed, and we look upon creeds with an almost indifference; but the fundamental facts of the religious life are more dominant than ever, and spiritual verities are more profoundly appreciated and more vigorously defended. We have a grander ideal for the present and a more encouraging prospect for the future. A wave of cheerfulness and hopefulness is sweeping over the world with a tidal flow that is irresistible, and the earth is a sweeter planet to live on, while heaven has come so near that we can hear the rustle of angel robes and catch the echo of our loved ones' voices.

It is a great privilege to be alive to-day, because we have a keener sense of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Fear as an element of the religious life has been eliminated, and love, which is to the soul what sunshine is to the field of wheat, has taken its place. The heart rejoices, but does not dread; and even in the direst peril, when wind and wave seem cruelly omnipotent, we feel secure in the consciousness that the Pilot at the helm has never lost a ship. There are no lee rocks in the Providence of God, nor any currents that can carry us out of our course. The Lord has charge of our safety, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

That is the religion of our age—bright, cheery, buoyant. No grim, capricious theological tyrant rules your destiny, and for His good pleasure dooms you to either temporary or eternal misery; no angry Deity tolerates your presence or visits you with the evidences of His wrath; you are not wandering hopelessly through a vale

of tears, a child of iniquity, with the brand of Cain on your brow. You are a wayward and sometimes a wanton creature, self-willed and obstinate, whom the Father is trying to lead in paths of righteousness, and you need nothing except the Christ spirit to set everything right and make your life a corner paradise.

Your fault is that you trust yourself too much and Him too little. You are not enough of a child in this manner, for when it is dark and grewsome the child clings closer to the mother's side; but when you are smitten by misfortune you let slip your grasp on Him and bitterly accuse Him of neglecting your interests. At the very moment when you need help most you separate yourself from the source of succor and become enfeebled by your distrust of His goodness. Such is the perversity of human nature.

You find the necessity for daily work very irksome, perhaps, and onerous. Why you ask, should you be doomed to constant toil for daily bread? That question is not easily answered, and the hardship of the common lot, for it is the common lot, cannot be denied. It is, however, futile to wonder why—we shall have leisure to solve the problem by and by. In the meantime, how shall we make the best of our environment and extract from it all the honey it conceals? By worry and cynical criticism? By grumbling because the universe is not made as we would have made it?

Christ's life was one of toil and suffering, and yet He found a divine satisfaction in obeying the law contained in the statement, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Why should we be better off than He was?

Your aim should be to do what you can with what you have. When things go ill with you it is better to go to God than to go away from Him. He is not your enemy, but your friend; He is not indifferent, but solicitous, and as your faith increases so will strength be enlarged. That is the law, and, although it is hard to understand it, a blessing always follows obedience.

Religion is well enough when the sky is cloudless, but it is absolutely necessary in time of trouble. It is not a broken reed, but a strong staff. The more you have of it the lighter your burden becomes. That fact belongs to the necromancy of life. The harder your trial, the deeper your faith—that is the rule to follow. Even when death despoils you of your treasure, say with trembling lips, "It is well," and the heart will glow and brighten like the blazing log on a winter hearthstone. And when you lie down to die yourself stretch out your hands to heaven and angels will come trooping down to bear you in their arms.

That is practical religion, and unless your religion is practical it is of no value whatever.—*New York Herald.*

Items of Interest.

—The Populists of Ohio have nominated Jacob S. Coxey, for governor.

—Ten British, including men, women and children, were murdered at one of the missions near Ku. Cheng, China.

—The collision of two Italian boats in Genoa Bay, July 21, resulted in the drowning of one hundred and forty-eight persons.

—The New York Times calculates that New Yorkers spend annually about \$5,500,000 on churches while theaters get about \$6,500,000.

—The sum of five million dollars will be spent this year, by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, in improvements, alterations, and extensions.

—The Cubans have strong hopes of success. They have elected Thomas Estrand Palma, a well known Cuban, President of the Republic of Cuba.

—The value of all property used for educational purposes in the United States is placed at \$600,000,000. The public school property alone is valued at \$400,000,000.

—The United States cruiser, Columbia, has made the best time on record, of any war vessel, going from Northampton to New York in six days, twenty three hours, and forty-nine minutes.

—The puddlers in the York, Pa., rolling mills have been informed that after Aug. 12, their wages would be increased from \$2.75 to \$3.00 per ton. The Birmingham, Ala., Rolling Mill company has also given notice of an increase in wages from \$4.00, to \$4.25 per ton.

—The following figures, showing the proportion of crimes caused by strong drink, were received in answer to letters of inquiry addressed to the wardens of the penitentiaries: Sing Sing, N. Y., 92 per cent.; Boston, Mass., 85 per cent.; Jackson, Mich., 78 per cent.

—The Sunday-closing law in New York City, executed by such men as Roosevelt and Parker has proven a success, and is more and more meeting the approval of the citizens. If the saloons can be closed, and closed successfully, one day of the week, why can't it be just as successfully closed the other six days?

—According to the opinion of Dr. Griffith John, one of the greatest living missionaries, there are at present in China about 55,000 communicants, which shows a remarkable increase since 1889. Should this work continue in the same ratio, there will be at the close of 1900, not far from 90,000 communicants.